

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) will join Rep. Sam Farr (D-Calif.) as co-chair of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus for the 111th Congress.

"I'm very excited to have Congressman Blunt join me in leading this caucus," said Rep. Farr. "The travel industry is so important for both our districts, and the efforts of the caucus will be even more important as we work to help communities across America recover from the slowing economy."

Blunt previously served as an active member of the caucus and has co-sponsored several bills supporting the travel industry. His district -- which includes the city of Branson -- lies in Southwest Missouri, where travel-related industries contribute \$1.2 billion to the economy and employ 13,000 people.

"Tourism helps drive the economy of our nation and plays a vital role in my district," said Rep. Blunt. "I'm looking forward to working with Congressman Farr and the rest of the caucus to draw attention to the economic benefits this industry has and promote its growth."

The caucus, which had more than 100 members at the close of the 110th Congress, works closely with the travel industry to support legislation and foster communication between lawmakers and travel leaders. In 2007, the U.S. Travel Association estimated that the travel industry contributed \$740 billion to the economy and employing 7.7 million people.

The caucus was busy last year, supporting two key travel promotion bills and hosting a successful roundtable that drew the Secretaries of Homeland Security and Commerce, House leadership from both parties and more than a dozen top travel executives. The caucus is also active in several issues including the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, the Visa Waiver Program and the U.S. VISIT program, which tracks incoming and exiting visitors.

Rep. Farr has been a co-chair of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus since 1997. His district on California's Central Coast encompasses the Monterey Bay, where the \$2 billion travel industry is second only to agriculture.

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